

**REMARKS/ARGUMENTS**

In response to the Office Action mailed December 30, 2003, Applicants respectfully request the Examiner to reconsider the above-captioned application in view of the foregoing amendments and the following comments. By this Amendment, Applicants have canceled claim 20 without prejudice and have amended claims 19, 22, 23, 26, 34 and 35. No new matter is added by this Amendment.

Please note that the present Amendment was previously presented in Applicants' Amendment, filed on March 1, 2004. However, the Examiner asserted that the amendments to the claims were not deemed to place the application in better form for appeal by materially reducing or simplifying the issues for appeal. Therefore, the Examiner did not enter the Amendment. Accordingly, Applicants are herewith presenting the Amendment again along with a timely filed Request for Continued Examination in compliance with 37 C.F.R. § 1.114.

Based on the above amendment and the remarks previously presented in the Amendment filed on March 1, 2004, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw the outstanding rejections. All of the Examiner's grounds for rejection have now been addressed and Applicants therefore respectfully request that the Examiner pass the pending claims to allowance.

**Appl. No. 09/945,377**  
**Reply to Office action of December 30, 2003**

**CONCLUSION**

Should the Examiner have any questions, the Examiner is encouraged to contact the attorney of record at the telephone number indicated below.

Respectfully submitted,

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